UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1998/551
22 June 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 22 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on 19 June 1998 concerning Eritrea's rejection of the peace effort by the delegation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Heads of State and Government, undertaken in accordance with the decision of the thirty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Ouagadougou.

I would be grateful if you could kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia on 19 June 1998

Organization of African Unity delegation fails to convince the Eritrean authorities

After conducting extensive discussions with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and with President Essayas Afeworki on 18 June 1998 in Addis Ababa and Asmara, and after convening a second and concluding session today here in Addis Ababa, the envoys have departed to their respective countries.

Pursuant to the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) endorsing the proposal of the facilitators, a delegation of Heads of State and Government lead by President Blais Compaore of Burkina Faso and the current Chairman of OAU has visited both Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Government of Ethiopia reiterated to the delegation of the OAU its unwavering commitment to the proposal of the facilitators, underscoring in no uncertain terms that the only viable path to a peaceful resolution of the crisis was for the Government of Eritrea to reciprocate by showing the same commitment and declaring unequivocally its acceptance of the proposal of the facilitators.

However, according to the press release issued by the OAU Information Division today, 19 June 1998:

> "In the course of its discussions with both parties, the Ethiopian side reiterated its acceptance of the proposals of the facilitators. The Eritrean side stated clearly that the facilitation was over. From this point of view, therefore, the delegation was not able, at this juncture, to make headway with respect to the facilitators' recommendation."

The crux of the matter is, therefore, for the Eritrean leadership to undo their invasion by withdrawing their forces, an action that will pave the way for addressing all issues, including delimitation and demarcation of the boundary as well as demilitarization of the border areas.

However, it is indeed regrettable that the Government of Eritrea still persists with its intransigence. This has clearly demonstrated to the OAU delegation its well-known attitude of evading the real and fundamental issue of the restoration of the status quo ante, which is the condition clearly established in the proposal of the facilitators for the resolution of all other issues.

By rejecting the OAU summit decision, the Eritrean leadership has once again demonstrated its utter defiance and contempt for African leaders and their collective decision. The genuine desire of African leaders to resolve the issue peacefully and their expressed concern was viewed with all seriousness on the part of the Ethiopian leadership. The response on the part of Eritrea leadership, regrettably, was one of deceit and prevarication.

Given the intransigent and inflexible position on the part of the Government of Eritrea and given its latest rejection of the decision of the OAU summit, the chance of resolving the crisis by peaceful means has been greatly diminished.